RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR IN STYLE

5  MAKING GREAT NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS
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Thank you for journeying with us throughout 2017! As we urge others to do their own self-reflection, we too are looking at how we can improve. For this, we need your honest feedback (the good, the bad, the ugly) to help us improve both this pullout and our online portal leaderonomics.com year-on-year. Head to goo.gl/0bVzJX and help us give you more of the content you love!

There are 10 great leadership articles in this week’s pullout. Our website is loaded with an enormous back catalogue of articles, with 50 new online features being added every month! Head to www.leaderonomics.com for heaps of leadership insight, thought-provoking podcasts and a library of more than 4,000 great videos.

If you would like your organisation to be featured in this pullout, contact us at editor@leaderonomics.com
I wasn’t the experience I expected 20 minutes earlier when I stepped into the hotel hot tub. I stopped to pause on each step for a few seconds to get used to the heat. I looked up at an almost full moon and a cloudless, starry sky.

It’s 8pm in Carpenita, California, just outside of Los Angeles, and a cool 16 degrees celsius — a perfect night for a dip in the outdoor hot tub I deserve it, I told myself. After all, I was on my feet for six whole hours today — albeit, in a Hollywood studio, shooting a training video based not-so-humbly on my latest book.

I’d sat alone as my face became the canvas for a makeup artist practicing her craft. Every word I spoke scripted and edited to perfection by my producer. My spot to stand marked with gaffer’s tape. The cadence of my words measured perfectly as I read them off a teleprompter expertly manned by a guy named Tito.

In between shots, I escaped to my private green room exactly nine paces from the set, where I considered taking a shower just to say that I used it.

I sipped tea made from liquorice, marshmallow root, and slippery elm bark, to help soothe and strengthen my actor’s voice.

But now, I was recovering from that not-so-gruelling experience and preparing myself mentally and physically for another day of it in the morning. As I sat there alone, buoyant in the still, pristine water of the hot tub, I heard the gate latch open and close and the sound of footsteps.

A man approached in a sand-covered wrinkled pair of walking shorts and an equally wrinkled short-sleeved button down shirt — presumably from a day lounging on the beach.

Ten years my senior, and with four-day stubble on his face, he stopped at the edge of the tub and asked if I wanted the “bubbles turned on.”

I said: “No thanks. But I don’t mind if you want them on.”

He said: “Thank you, I would.” He turned the timer to its maximum and returned to the tub. It was about time for me to get out.

But I thought it best to stay for a minute or two, if only for the social grace of exchanging a few words with this man, and to not make it seem as if his presence had scared me off.

He took off his shirt and stepped gently into the tub, pausing on each step just as I had, to get used to the heat.

I thought it strange that he didn’t change into more fitting swimwear. But, maybe that’s just what they do in California.

As he reached the last step, he sank down to his knees, submerging himself almost fully in the water with only the very top of his head showing. He ran his fingers through his hair.

Slowly, though, he seemed more vigorously — more like he was taking a shower than relaxing in a hot tub.

When he finally sat up and leaned back against the wall, he began to speak again.

“Those bubbles really help — with the pain.”

“How’s that?” I said.

“My back. It’s excruciating. Has been for years. The only thing that seems to help is the hot tub. None of the drugs seem to work. They say I’ve got one more I can try. But, I probably won’t.”

“What happened?”

“Who knows? I had an operation once. They removed a few bone spurs.”

“Did that help?”

“No, made it worse. And then I had a misunderstanding with a police officer. He yanked my arm really hard. Viciously, really. That’s never been the same. And it made my back worse.”

“Well, I’m glad the hot tub works.” I smiled at him, but he didn’t return it. “You know, my wife left me because of — it — my back. A good friend stole her from me because I’m just not good for much with it.”

He looks away and pauses. “We were married for 14 years.” Another pause.

Then he said: “God, I miss her so much” as his voice cracks. His hands come up instinctively to hide tears that would have been indistinguishable from the chlorine-saturated water dripping down his face already.

“Yeah, I can imagine so.”

After a short silence, he said: “You know, eventually you just don’t know what to do. You end up sleeping in the bushes and wishing she’d come back.”

“I didn’t know what to make of that. So, I didn’t say anything.”

After he regained his composure, he said: “And then, my brothers died. First the oldest. Now all of them are gone. One by one, they just died.” He pauses. “Bill was the best friend I ever had. I don’t know what to do without him.”

His voice is cracking again now.

“T’m really sorry to hear all that,” I said. In my head I was struggling between competing thoughts of sympathy for this man that I’d had since he first started speaking, and a new feeling of uncomfortableness from the rapidly growing intimacy of my story and my undervinge stature as his audience.

Another round of laments about losing his wife, his brothers, and his health. Each one was accompanied by a stronger emotional break in his voice.

It started to seem as if this was becoming more of a monologue than a dialogue. And just as I wondered if I was only a voyuer to his sollioquy, he notices the silhouette of a man on the balcony overlooking the pool area.

His head snapped back in my direction and he nervously asked: “Is that a friend of yours?”

I looked, even though I was traveling alone, so I knew it wasn’t. “No. I think that’s the front desk clerk.”

“Oh,” was all he said. The answer seemed to disappoint him. But I couldn’t tell if it was because he was yearning for a new audience member’s ear to bend, or out of fear that someone else might join us and interrupt whatever therapy our conversation and warm water was providing.

Something about all of this just didn’t feel right.

So, after another stretch of silence, I asked: “So, are you staying at this hotel?”

“Oh, no,” he said, unapologetically. “I could never stay anywhere this nice.”

Another pause.

“Yeah — and then his face turned away again, “I’m just outside,” those last words said with resignation and a shrug of his shoulders.

And that’s when all the pieces snapped into place. Blimey, there’s a homeless man bathing in the hot tub! With me!

I thought: what should I do about this? Should I tell someone? Or should I get my wallet and help the guy out?

I thought about the irony of our situations.

At the moment, we were both just middle-aged men, enjoying a dip in a hot tub on a beautiful California night. But the juxtaposition of the situations that got us here was heavy on my mind.

Even though what I had been doing all day certainly counted as work, it was likely the most pampered I’ve ever been outside of a spa resort... Whereas, I suspected I might be the only person my tub-mate had spoken to all day — or at least the only one who’d actually listened to him.

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I was constantly the focus of attention of every conscious creature and every mechanical and digital object in the space I inhabited all day.

And if ever anything less-than-perfect happened, a team of people and technology spun into motion to set it right.

A touch-up to the makeup on my nose. A lighting adjustment. “Get you more tea, Mr. Smith?”

Whereas, I suspected I might be the only person my tub-mate had spoken to all day — or at least the only one who’d actually listened to him.

After another minute or two, I decided to get out. I’d been in for 20 minutes while he’d arrived and was now pushing 30. Or, was that just an excuse? I honestly didn’t know which.

As I got out, I struggled with an immediate guilt — was my exit too quick after it finally dawned on me what was happening?

“Well, it’s time for me to go. I hope your back is feeling better,” I said.

“Yes, it’s getting there,” he said. “Bless you, friend.”

As I walked out of the gate and toward the lobby, the front desk clerk appeared in the doorway.

He opened the door and leaned out, tentatively, as if the direction of his next step depended on the outcome of our conversation.

He said: “Is everything all right out there?”

I looked up at him and smiled. “Yes,” I said. “Everything’s just fine.”

He said. “Everything’s just fine.”

I looked up at him and smiled. “Yes,” I said. “Everything’s just fine.”
A HUMBLING PRACTICE
HOW SELF-REFLECTION LIES AT THE HEART OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

By ROSHAN THIRAN
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Recently, I was asked an interesting question: if I could acknowledge just one leadership quality that I believe is guaranteed to remain constant, what would it be? Just one? Wow, that’s tough. There are so many qualities that are necessary for great leadership – passion, patience, confidence, perseverance, integrity, transparency, vision, the ability to execute ideas... and the list goes on. But there is a leadership quality that I believe lies at the heart of effective leadership – and one that often sees leaders break out into a sweat whenever they embrace it. Others still prefer to avoid it altogether. It’s something that sounds great, and most leaders will say they do it, but it can be quite a painful process. I’m talking, of course, about self-reflection.

If I could pick just one quality that is guaranteed to remain constant throughout my own leadership journey, that would be my choice.

WHY SELF-REFLECTION?
Because everything begins with knowing what you’re doing, why you’re doing it, and how you’re doing it. Leaders who don’t take time to reflect regularly on themselves and where they’re headed risk bumping into (avoidable) failure time and time again. Self-reflection is a humbling, yet powerful technique that helps leaders (and anyone else) to improve their performance. But it’s a tough process as it makes you take an honest look at yourself – your strengths, your weaknesses, areas that require improvement, and how you should work to grow and develop in the coming weeks, months and years.

Many leaders talk a good game but, let’s face it, none of us like to admit when we’re wrong, or that we could have approached or done something better. Self-reflection is uncomfortable but, much like exercising, it offers countless benefits, and actually becomes easier and more enjoyable the more we do it.

One study that monitored the performance of call centre agents found that those who spent 15 minutes reflecting at the end of the day on what lessons they could learn performed 23% better after 10 days than those who didn’t reflect.

Another study of UK commuters found similar results. Those who used their commute to plan their day and think about how they were going to approach tasks experienced an increase in happiness, were more productive, and were less likely to burn out from stress.

IT CALLS FOR COMMITMENT
No matter how busy I find myself, I always set aside at least five minutes each day for self-reflection, and try to increase that time on weekends and holidays. It can seem like a passive exercise, self-indulgent almost. However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest what many of the greatest leaders have always known: you can influence other people to behave in certain ways, but you only have full control over yourself.

In other words, any goal or success you want to achieve – whether it’s a solo or team effort – has to start with you. Everything else is consequential to how you are as a leader.

Some leaders I’ve spoken to on the subject have expressed their reluctance towards self-reflection, while others have admitted they’re not quite sure what it entails.

WHAT IS SELF-REFLECTION?
It is about asking yourself deliberate questions that are designed to give insights into how you work: what you do well, and what needs improving. It’s also about being aware of making justifications or rationalisations.

In order for it to be effective, self-reflection has to be brutally honest. That’s not to say that you beat yourself up, but you don’t hide from uncomfortable truths either. Instead, you face up to any shortcomings you find, and make a commitment to yourself to resolve them.

Here are just some of the questions I ask myself during my sessions of self-reflection:

1. AM I BEING TRUTHFUL TO MYSELF?
In the day-to-day running of a team or a business, it’s easy to get caught up in so many considerations that you begin to lose sight of what your values are and why you’re doing the work in the first place.

Our identities can become quickly lost in the paperwork, the meetings, the presentations and the networking events.

These are all necessary practicalities that come with being a leader, and this question helps realign yourself with what’s going on around you.

2. AM I ALLOWING THE THINGS I CAN’T CONTROL TO STRESS ME OUT?
Any leader will know how tough it is at times to avoid worrying about everything.

If we think about anything we do in life, it really all boils down to how well prepared we are. Environment, factors and conditions outside our control all affect the eventual outcome of what we’re trying to do.

We use up so much mental energy in focusing on what we can’t influence, rather than concentrating on what we can do to prepare in the best way possible.

3. AM I MAKING TIME FOR THOSE CLOSEST TO ME?
If I had a dollar for every time a respected leader has pointed out the importance of this question to me over the years, my piggy bank would be overflowing.

What we do is important, and we should never forget that: but those closest to us are who we do it for. They are our inspiration and our constant reminders of what we value most.

By making time for those closest to you, you keep yourself in touch with the things that truly matter.

4. AM I ACHIEVING MY GOALS?
You can row the boat harder, but if you’re headed in the wrong direction, you’ll end up anywhere rather than somewhere.

This is perhaps one of the most common pitfalls of leadership, we get so caught up in the doing that we forget about the destination.

Having to stop and change course where necessary doesn’t point to failed leadership.

Rather, it shows true leadership through the strength and courage to change direction, no matter how far you’ve travelled in the other direction.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER
With just these four questions, it’s clear why some leaders can find the process of self-reflection to be an uncomfortable one.

However, it’s better to reach your destination along a bumpy road than to arrive smoothly at a place you didn’t intend to be.

That’s why, for me, self-reflection is the cornerstone of effective leadership.

CHECKLIST
- Self-driven
- Motivated to meet targets
- Great interpersonal skills
- Be part of a growing team

BE OUR PARTNER
Leaderonomics is expanding and we are looking for partners to work with. If you fit the bill (including a heart of gold, because we go the extra mile) then you are probably who we’re looking for.
What's the Best Advice You Have Received?

Our Folks at Leaderonomics Share Their Year-End 'Gifts'

By Tamara Jayne
	tamara.jayne@leaderonomics.com

As 2017 comes to an end and we prepare to ring in the New Year, we decided to tap into the leadership minds of a few people here at Leaderonomics. The question we asked was very simple and taught me some great lessons as I begin to prepare for 2018. So: “What is the best advice you have ever received?” Here’s what they had to say:

Roshan Thiran
Chief executive officer

There is no dead end in any situation. There are always options and opportunities whatever the circumstance. The only limit is ourselves. It becomes hopeless and a dead end simply because we believe it to be. But the possibilities are endless. As Harvey Specter (from the TV series Suits) loves to quote: “What are your choices when someone puts a gun to your head? You take the gun, or you pull out a bigger one. Or, you call their bluff. Or, you do any one of 146 other things.” We just have to find these options.

Sashe Kanapathi
Director, Corporate Solutions

Steve Jobs once said that sometimes you can only connect the dots looking back. I think people should stop stop trying to chart a perfect course, but just accumulate as many experiences as they can.

Ang Hui Ming
Growth and strategic initiatives leader, Enterprise

Yes, it can be frustrating to lead some people but you must always empower them by their strengths, not their weaknesses. Find out what they’re good at and what they enjoy doing, and motivate them with it.

Yeoh Lin Lin
Leaderonomics.com Bahasa Malaysia editor

Never shortchange yourself with self-limiting thoughts or general perceptions. Life in general is the teacher. Personal experiences, too. Here’s an example. I used to think that a giant information technology (IT) company was beyond my reach. It had the reputation of only hiring the best of the best. And for the longest time, I dare not even think of applying for a job there even though I had the experience and expertise.

When an open position came up that fit my skillset, I decided to submit my application after much hesitation and just before the closing deadline. I was shortlisted, went through a grueling series of interviews (written, teleconference calls, face-to-face), and got the job. Challenge yourself!
NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS

THE 17 PROMISES THAT SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE MAKE TO THEMSELVES

1. DO ONE THING YOU’VE BEEN AFRAID TO DO
The most paralysing fear is fear of the unknown. (At least it is for me.) However, nothing ever turns out to be as hard or as scary as you think. Plus, it’s incredibly exciting to overcome a fear. You’ll get that “Oh, my. I can’t believe I just did that!” rush. That’s an amazing feeling you probably haven’t experienced for a long time.

2. APOLOGISE
People make mistakes. So we blame them for our problems. But we are almost always to blame as well. Maybe we didn’t provide enough training. Maybe we didn’t foresee a potential problem. Maybe we asked too much, too soon. We did not do something we could or should have done. Take responsibility instead — not in a masochistic, we-see-me-way, but in an empowering way. Take responsibility, and then focus on being smarter or better or faster or more creative next time.

3. START SOMETHING
You have goals. You have ideas. You have ideas. Who cares? You have nothing until you actually do something. Every day, we hesitation and uncertainty stop us from acting on our ideas. Fear of the unknown and fear of failure stops me and may be what stops you, too. Pick one plan, one goal, one idea. And get started. Do something. Do anything. Just take one small step. The first step is by far the hardest. Every successive step will be a lot easier.

4. TELL ONE PERSON THEY’RE AWESOME
No one receives enough praise. No one. Pick someone who did something well and tell them. Surprise praise is a gift that costs nothing but is priceless to the recipient.

5. PROVE ONE PERSON WRONG
I’m ashamed to admit it, but one of the best ways to motivate me is to insult me. Or force me to manufacture a way to feel insulted. Or prove, not the point. I use rejection to fuel my motivation to do whatever it takes to prove that person wrong. More importantly, achieve what I want to achieve. Call it manufactured anger. Call it artificial competition. Call it childish and justified in feeling that way or not.

6. ASK ONE PERSON FOR HELP
Asking someone for help instantly recognises the person’s skills and values and conveys your respect and admiration. That’s reason enough to ask someone to help you. The fact you will get the help you need is icing on the achievement cake.

7. OFFER TO HELP ONE PERSON
Then flip it around. Many people see asking for help as a sign of weakness, so they hesitate. Yet we can all use help. But don’t just say: “Is there anything I can help you with?”

8. DO THE ONE THING THAT NO ONE ELSE IS WILLING TO DO
Pick one thing other people aren’t willing to do. Pick something simple. Pick something small. Whatever it is, do it. Instantly. You’re a little different from the rest of the pack. Then keep going. Every day, do one thing no one else is willing to do. After a week, you’ll be uncommon. After a month, you’ll be special. After a year, you’ll be incredible, and you won’t be like anyone else.

9. REFUSE TO CARE WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK
Most of the time, you should worry about what other people think — but not if it stands in the way of living the life you really want to live. Pick one thing you haven’t tried simply because you’re worried about what other people think — and just go do it. It’s your life. Live it.

10. TELL ONE PERSON YES
You’re busy. Your plate is full. There are plenty of reasons to sit tight, stay safe, keep things as they are. But that also means tomorrow will be just like today. Say yes to something different. Say yes to something scary. Say yes to the opportunity you’re most afraid of. When you say yes, you’re really saying: “I trust myself.”

11. TELL ONE PERSON NO
Still, you can’t do everything. You can’t help everyone. You may want to, but you can’t. Sometimes you just need to say no: to a favour, to a request, to a family member. Sometimes you really need to be able to focus on what is important to you. Say no at least once before the end of January — the harder to say, the better. And don’t worry if you feel selfish. When your heart is in the right place, what you accomplish by spending more time on your goals will eventually benefit other people too.

12. “FIRE” ONE PERSON
Maybe there’s an employee you really need to let go but haven’t. Or maybe there’s a customer, or a vendor, or even just a friend. Sometimes the best addition starts with subtraction. Pick someone who is dragging you down or holding you back, and let them go.

13. JUST LET IT FLY
Yes, you only get one chance to make a first impression. Yes, perfection is the only acceptable outcome. Unfortunately, no product or service is ever perfect, and no project or initiative is perfectly planned. Work hard, do great work, and let it fly. Your customers will tell you what needs to be improved — which means you’ll get to make improvements that actually matter.

14. DO ONE THING THAT’S NOT YOUR JOB
Job descriptions are fine until they get in the way of getting things done. No matter what your role or what you’ve accomplished, you’re never too good to roll up your sleeves, get dirty, and do a little grunt work. No job is ever too menial, no task too unskilled or boring.

15. EMBRACE ONE THING ANOTHER PERSON DOES
Sure, we’re all individuals. We should set our own courses and follow our own paths — most of the time. But, sometimes, the best thing to do is copy what made someone else successful. Pick someone who has accomplished what you would like to accomplish, and follow that path. One time, don’t try to reinvent a perfectly good wheel.

16. DO SOMETHING FOOLISH
Sometimes the dumbest things result in our fondest memories — the time you and two employees stayed up all night loading trucks and listening to every Led Zeppelin album in order; the time you and another employee drove all night so you could arrive at the customer’s warehouse first thing in the morning to sort a defective product, the time you and a crew stayed in the plant all weekend during a snowstorm, sleeping on cots and eating vending machine food and cranking out orders. Each happened more than 20 years ago, but my memories are vivid. Do something seemingly stupid or outrageous or crazy — or harder, the better. You probably won’t love it while it’s happening, but the result will be doing something cool and creating a memory that will always make you smile.

17. CALL YOUR PARENTS
Your parents love you. They want the best for you. They will always be there for you. They won’t be around forever. Call them.

By JEFF HADEN
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The 17 promises that successful people make to themselves.

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THE CEO JOURNEY

BECOMING THE EXECUTIVE WHO CAN SEE AROUND CORNERS IN 2018

By PETER LAM
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Can you see around corners in 2018? Are you ready to lead and manage in the new year? This is a question that Thailand’s CEO of Macrokiosk, Datuk Kenny Goh, asks himself every year. ‘To see around corners’ means to think of the future, to anticipate upcoming changes and prepare for them. It’s an essential skill for leaders as they navigate the challenges of today’s rapidly evolving business environment. Here are some tips from Datuk Kenny Goh on how to become an executive who can see around corners in 2018.

1. **Preparation is Key**
   - Leaders need to start preparing for the new year by setting goals and objectives. This includes identifying key challenges and opportunities that may arise in the coming year.
   - The most important thing is to take the first step in investing into digital initiatives. It’s not going to be an easy investment, but a relatively important investment that can be a LinkedIn for your business.

2. **Innovate and Adapt**
   - The world of business is changing rapidly. Leaders need to be innovative and adapt to the new challenges and opportunities. This includes embracing new technologies and finding creative ways to use them.
   - The CEO of a company needs to stay up-to-date with the latest industry trends and be ready to pivot quickly if needed.

3. **Collaborate and Leverage**
   - Collaboration is key to success in today’s business world. Leaders should seek out partnerships and collaborations that can help them achieve their goals.
   - Modern leaders need to be able to work effectively with teams and stakeholders both within and outside their organizations.

4. **Communicate Clearly**
   - Clear communication is essential in any business setting. Leaders must be able to articulate their vision and strategies effectively.
   - Leaders should be ready to communicate with their employees, customers, and other stakeholders.

5. **Be a Trailblazer**
   - In 2018, leaders need to be bold and take risks. This includes experimenting, failing, and trying again.
   - Leaders should be willing to take the lead and make decisions that may not always be popular.

By preparing and adapting, innovating and collaborating, communicating clearly, and being a trailblazer, leaders can see around corners in 2018 and navigate the challenges of the new year.
I t has to come to that time of year again when we set our sights towards making the New Year the best one yet by setting out grand resolutions for positive change.

But for some, their bold plans will last about as long as their intention to not overindulge during the holiday season. As we head towards 2018, we recognise the New Year as an opportunity to begin with a clean slate, a chance to help our stall on solid ground and make this the year where we truly bring out the best in ourselves.

Alas, past research offers bleak insights into the strength of our willpower, with around 60% of Americans said to give up on their resolutions by mid-February, while roughly 66% of Brits revert to their old habits within the first month. So what’s going on? At the turn of the New Year, a good many of us are clearly excited by the idea of making major changes: what is it that kills our inspiration so quickly?

It turns out that the devil might be in the expectation — we tend to anticipate results arising more quickly than they actually do.

One reason for this is belief in the myth that it takes around 20 days for a habit to form; however, not all habits are created equally. Research conducted in 2009 at University College London (UCL) suggests that, on average, it takes 66 days for a habit to form — but it all depends on the habit.

For example, if you resolve to drink a glass of water first thing every morning, that’s a simple task and, done consistently, is likely to cement itself as a habit within 20 days or so.

Comparatively, resolving to go on a 30-minute walk every day could take as long as 50 days to become habitual.

UCL researchers predicted that more complex habits could take up to 250 days to form for those to whom discipline doesn’t come easily.

While this might at first seem rather dreary, the research acts as a helpful yardstick by which to measure our efforts. After all, if we have no idea about how long progress should take, it’s understandable that our thoughts might turn towards giving up at the first hurdle.

With that in mind, here are four things that can help you stay the course and make 2018 a year of success.

1. **Reflect on the top three changes you’d like to make**

We can seduce ourselves into setting multiple goals for the year ahead, which is sure to lead to feelings of overwhelm.

Instead — before you even think the words ‘gym membership’ — give some thought to what changes really matter to you, and why. Having a clear sense of purpose before setting a goal will help to boost your focus and commitment.

This is more effective than to name a few changes you’d like to make and then try to pin a purpose to them; use that approach and it won’t be long before the words, “Oh well, there’s always next year” sound from your mouth in quiet desperation.

2. **Discipline trumps motivation**

As we look ahead to the New Year with excitement, it’s easy to get pumped up about what we might be able to achieve and how accomplished we’ll feel when we succeed.

But when it comes to the crunch, the motivation to follow through can disappear quicker than a tasty Christmas pudding as we head towards February.

To counter this, it’s important to realise that motivation is frequently unreliable and, in any case, isn’t responsible for our efforts — we are, and that calls for consistent, deliberate action every day.

Having a sense of discipline — engaging in certain behaviours regardless of whether we want to or not — is what helps to bring about real change.

It might not be as attractive as motivation, but it is a whole lot more dependable.

3. **3 Skills You’ll need for the future of work**

When I graduated from university in 2005, one of my professors took me aside and offered me the best piece of advice I received in all my time in education. “You might think that your studies have ended,” he said, “but you should know that this is just the beginning.”

Much of what you’ve learnt will be obsolete in five years’ time — if you want to achieve anything worthwhile, you have to keep learning.”

At the time, I didn’t think this was great advice.

After all, I planned to become a journalist — how much could the required skillset change over five or even 10 years? Everyone will always read newspapers — where else would they get their news from?

The same kind of thinking was probably in the minds of web developer graduates in the 1990s and early 2000s, putting a website together was a complex business.

You had to know coding for a start, and since the future was likely to be all things internet, being a website developer was forever the stuff of high property.

Alas, fast-forward 10 years and the advice from my professor turns out to be quite right.

The advent of alternative and social media, blogging and so-called ‘citizen journalism’ has meant that now people get their news from all kinds of sources.

As for work, anyone and everyone now has a laptop and an internet connection can now create a website in a matter of minutes.

Alongside the phrase: “We’ve always done things this way,” perhaps we should put: “People will always need...” in the file marked “Dangerous Phrases to Avoid”.

As we see social, economic and technological advances developing at speed, it can be daunting to keep up with all the trends that are taking place.

On the other hand, many of these advancements are to our benefit. As we look ahead to the New Year with excitement, it’s easy to get pumped up about what we might be able to achieve and how accomplished we’ll feel when we succeed.

But when it comes to the crunch, the motivation to follow through can disappear quicker than a tasty Christmas pudding as we head towards February.

To counter this, it’s important to realise that motivation is frequently unreliable and, in any case, isn’t responsible for our efforts — we are, and that calls for consistent, deliberate action every day.

Having a sense of discipline — engaging in certain behaviours regardless of whether we want to or not — is what helps to bring about real change.

It might not be as attractive as motivation, but it is a whole lot more dependable.

1. **CAPITALISING ON NEW TRENDS**

The workplace has changed dramatically over the last 10 years, and it’ll surely see a further dramatic shift over the next 10.

The world is changing and we have two choices: either we find ways to keep up and move ahead, or we get left behind.

Whether we take online or offline courses, attend seminars, read self-development books or listen to industry leaders, it’s no longer enough to grow with a five-year plan in mind.

We are now in a position where we need to think about how things might develop over the next 10, 15 and 20 years, and where our place might be within those developments.

2. **LEARNING NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

This is a skill that all professionals and organisations currently talk about as being vital to business growth and development.

As customer awareness, issues and demands increase, so too will the need for organisations to truly focus on being service-orientated.

As individuals, we need to ask ourselves: am I in for the sake of closing the deal, or to show that I care about the quality of service my organisation provides?

As customer likes and dislikes, values and fears evolve, people who are agile enough to adapt to customer needs will be worth their weight in gold for organisations.

3. **FOCUSBING ON SERVICE**

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4. **DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Contrary to popular opinion, this doesn’t mean “learn to be nice”.

Emotional intelligence is about building meaningful relationships that are based on qualities such as active listening, empathy, responsiveness and, most importantly, self-awareness.

One of the biggest challenges for organisations today is that people come to them with the relevant skills but often lack the “soft” skills required to develop strong working partnerships, both internally and externally.

In the mad rush of getting things done, people who can connect with and relate to others are priceless.

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I f the headline caught your attention, you are either a parent who recently heard this exaggerated outburst from your child, or you are the child yourself. Who am I kidding though, since young people hardly read printed newspapers these days.

For parents or guardians who are reading this, share it with your children, nieces, nephews or your friends' children.

Let’s put ourselves in their shoes, shall we? You’re probably among those who are probably planning your final year of secondary school, or have just completed SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) or your pre-University studies.

You are now faced with one of the greatest modern day dilemmas next to “what should I eat?”

What career do I want for myself when I graduate?

The general Malaysian stereotype of career ‘go-tos’ such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and accountants may still hold true today, but with Industry 4.0 making waves around the world, what other options are out there?

The scary truth – there are fewer options but, at the same time, a whole lot more.

Because of the internet and the rapid development of technology, the career landscape has changed considerably. Automation has replaced many jobs, and it is not just the simple, manual labour work that is becoming obsolete to humans.

Even the beloved and rewarding path of accountancy is under threat. However, it is not all doom and gloom. How many of you parents have been exasperated when hearing you child say: “I want to build a start-up”? The traditional career pathways have branched out into so many other routes, thanks to the digital age.

In 10 years’ time, your children may have jobs that are not yet created today. On top of that, we are talking about a generation that often pursues great meaning and purpose behind the things they do and want more from their careers.

With the vast amount of information (and pressure), how do you help them start exploring? Here are some basic tips to begin that voyage:

1 CAREER INTEREST

What do they like to do? When you observe them play as they grow up, what seems to draw their attention? Do they like to work more with their hands, or use more cognitive skills? Are they more interested in science, or are they more into the creative arts?

If you are uncertain of their career interests, there are free tests out there to help narrow down. I would personally recommend TalentCorp’s Nurturing Expert Talent (NiTE) initiative.

The career interest test on the platform is based on the Holland Codes, one of the more well-known career interest theories globally.

Dr John Holland’s theory is that we are multi-faceted people with certain combinations of interests, and the test will help to classify our interests into a three-letter code of six. As parents/guardians, you can encourage them to use the code to identify their matching career pathways.

2 PERSONALITY STYLES

What is this ‘Mix-Match-Making’ talking about? ‘Get work, do only lah!’ That was what my mum used to say. Well, like it or not, personality does have a role to play in long-term career engagement.

Your personality drives your motivation, needs and fear.

Essentially, a good mix of job role, environment, and culture is needed for job satisfaction; and different personality styles should differ in certain combinations.

Personality styles should be used in tandem with career interest. Let us use the medical field as an example. When I say medicine, you automatically think of ‘doctor’.

From SPM onwards, that’s at least five years of education, multiple years of housemanship, and more if they want to be a specialist.

Do they have the conscientiousness to even go through all that? Maybe they prefer to work with their hands building things instead of seeing people.

Or maybe they are highly cognitive and prefer to spend time doing research – then lecturing skills and research expertise are frequently sought after.

My point is, a career pathway is like a highway, there are many small roads that can lead them to find a place they can call their own. By being aware of both their personality styles and interests, those small roads are a little less scary to navigate.

3 LISTEN TO THEM

“Huh! I have to do what?”

Yes, you read that right. Do you recall the last time you had a 30-minute (or more) discussion on what your child’s future career may look like?

Do you remember the content of that discussion?

In my work with Leaderonomics, I deal a lot with university students, be it in long camps or one-day training programmes.

In my conversations with them, too many admit that they do not really speak to their parents about their potential career paths. Why is that?

They say that, more often than not, parents (while we know you have good intentions) have an idea of their child’s future already, and will ‘nudge’ them towards their ‘destiny’.

May your children find their place to make this world a better one each day as they go through their lives.

All the best!

By ALVIN TEOH

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“WHAT SHOULD I STUDY?”

HOW TO SET YOUR CHILDREN ON THE RIGHT CAREER PATH

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A PATERNAL INFLUENCE

THE LEADERSHIP LESSONS I LEARNED FROM MY LATE FATHER

By AMANDA CHUA

www.leaderonomics.com

“Think of me as Buck Rogers’ great-great-grandfather, a man who lived in a world where the telephones were horse-drawn. However, I’m also a man who lived in the 21st century and had the opportunity to see how society has evolved.”

The 9-month-old baby was silent and pale under his blanket. The nurse entered the room quietly, enveloping the baby in a blanket of silence as she approached him. As the baby’s body shifted slightly, the nurse held her breath, observing the baby’s breaths. The baby’s mother, who was sitting in the corner of the room, was petrified with anxiety. She had been told that her baby had a rare genetic disorder that required immediate medical attention.

The nurse, sensing the mother’s distress, went over and sat down next to her. She placed a gentle hand on the mother’s shoulder and said, "I know this is a difficult time for you, but your baby is in good hands. Our team is doing everything they can to help your baby.

The nurse continued, "We have been treating babies with similar conditions for years now, and the success rates have been quite encouraging. We are confident that your baby will receive the best care possible.

The mother let out a small sob, feeling relieved. The nurse continued, "Your baby is receiving the best possible care, and we will keep you updated on his progress. In the meantime, try to take care of yourself."

The nurse left the room, leaving the mother to soak in the words of reassurance. As she walked away, the nurse couldn’t help but wonder how many families she had helped in her career. She knew that her job was not easy, but it was one of the most rewarding.

She had seen the joy on families’ faces when their loved ones recovered. She had seen the tears of relief when a diagnosis was confirmed to be treatable. She had seen the hope when all seemed lost.

The nurse knew that her work was not in vain. She knew that her efforts were making a difference in the lives of others. And she knew that it was her job to keep fighting for a world where no one had to face such hardships alone.

In the end, it was the simple gestures that made a difference. A kind word, a warm smile, a comforting hand. It was these small acts of kindness that made the biggest impact on the world.

The nurse knew that her work was not done. There were still many families out there who needed her help. And she knew that she would continue to work tirelessly until every family had the help they needed.
LIFE AFTER UNIVERSITY

Life after University can be daunting yet exciting. It’s a time to consolidate all your years and finally explore the world in a new light.

Take intentional time to ponder the past, the present and the possibilities ahead. You’ve finally earned your degree; this is thrilling! But as many may argue, this certificate is just a piece of paper.

What counts are the years of experience in University and the person you become after graduation. A degree certificate, generally, qualifies you for a job of choice. But it doesn’t reflect who you really are or can become.

Life is simple. We tend to make it complex. So, as a University graduate, take time to enjoy life. Make life your lifelong “University”.

Explore, stay focused, stretch your opportunities and expand your talents. Most importantly, be open to growth and always nurturing your character. This is one of your best seasons in life. Here are five things you can immediately do after University.

1. EXPLORE
   Take this chance to discover your purest passions, the world, relationships, faith, and career opportunities. Don’t be lazy, get out there and discover life and its many offerings.
   This is your greatest season to be responsible of your growth, especially in your experience and mindset. Breathe in new cultures, societies, politics, science of things; basically anything that make the world go round.
   However, while exploring, remember to keep your principles in check. Your moral compass will allow you to view life and the world in a deeper manner.

As Apostle Paul says: “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful/expedient.”

2. SET GOALS IN LIFE
   Don’t leave life to chance. There is a fine line between those who truly take life seriously and those who just don’t care about life at all.
   If you want to be victorious, make an impact (in any area), be relevant and competent, you will need to set a favourable amount of goals in life.
   Aim just that tad bit higher. Be intentional in your goal-setting so that you are clear of your plans.
   Don’t shoot a blind arrow and hope to hit a bullseye!

3. TAKE CALCULATED RISKS AND TRY THINGS
   Do your due diligence and take risks, with all your might. You will never experience everything in life, but you have the opportunity to create something that means everything to you.
   Be observant, keep a look out for opportunities. Look at problems in a positive way and find solutions for them.
   There are many things around you that could use some improvement.
   You can be that person to try it out, who knows, you may be a change maker. “Better an oops than a what if”.

4. FIND A MENTOR
   A mentor can be confusing to many. The idea is that qualified mentors are like gold mines.
   They have years of experience in life and/or in their given vertical (i.e. business, finance, spiritual, general life).
   As you explore life, be humble and allow others to guide you in your life, to advise you.
   It is paramount that you have a cornerstone to be a point of reference in your life.
   A mentor is not a person that takes over the wheel of your life, but rather to direct/suggest your path. Ultimately, the choice is yours.
   The mentor will still journey with you, to pick you up when things go south and to celebrate with you in momentous occasions.
   These mentors are the pillars to your structure. Choose them wisely.

5. HAVE FUN, CHILL!
   More often than not, we tend to view life as a super complex and difficult chore.
   Life itself is bigger than all of us; while you’re at it, make the best of it and have fun!
   Having fun in life can be a natural antidote to all our problems.
   As long as you find the sparks of joy in-between every challenge that life throws at you, your mindset will change to accommodate.
   Life is too short to be overly rigid. Do all things with enjoyment, including work.
   Find fulfilment in the fruit of your labour; don’t feel bad.

bonus: be contented yet ambitious

Challenges in life are unavoidable but necessary for your growth.
As a young graduate stepping out into a brand new chapter of life, remember to always be grateful that your challenges will eventually lead to you learning a valuable lesson.
Be contented that you are able to progress into your next phase of life; advancing towards a better future.
While it is important to remain contented, never miss out on being ambitious.
Being ambitious gives you an extra boost towards fulfilling your purpose in life.
Be contented with your current state; be ambitious for a better future.
Go the extra mile and find fulfilment and purpose in life and at work.